Nomen: HW for Daily Life 3: Women in Rome

Spatium:

**Status of Women in Ancient Rome (reading modified from Mr.Donn)**

In ancient Rome, all women were under an adult male guardian.  That guardian was the oldest male in the household be it a father, grandfather, husband, uncle, or even oldest male child.

Women were the center of the household.  The wife of the guardian was responsible for taking care of the home and family.  The wife of the guardian was also responsible for teaching all the younger women how to cook, sew, be good wives and run a household.

**Were women citizens?**That's a really good question. There is not a very clear answer. In ancient Rome, women fell into their own category. There were three classes of women - full citizen, foreign (alien) and slave. Women, whether they were a "full citizen" or not, could not vote or hold office. For hundreds of years, women could not own property, inherit goods, sign a contract, work outside the home, or run a business. They could not defend themselves in court. They had no rights.

A woman was under the full authority of her husband's head of his family (oldest male) and had no legal say in much of anything. So, although women might be given the title of full citizen, they did not have the rights of a full citizen. The title was mostly for the purpose of marriage. The purpose of marriage in ancient Rome was to produce citizens. If a Roman citizen (male) wanted his children to automatically be Roman citizens themselves, he had to marry the daughter of two Roman citizens. There were other ways for his children to become citizens, but that was the easiest.

Things changed somewhat after Rome became an empire.  Women gained the right to conduct business.  They could own land, free slaves and even get a paid job.  While they were still considered under the guardianship of a father or husband, they had many more rights than previously. But they still could not vote or hold office.

Questions from reading:

1. What does it mean that women “were the center of the household”?
2. Reread and underline the sentence “Women, whether they were a ‘full citizen’ or not, could not vote or hold office.” What rights did women not have?
3. What rights did women have?
4. How could someone be a Roman citizen?
5. Reread and underline the sentence “Things changed somewhat after Rome became an empire.  Women gained the right to conduct business.  They could own land, free slaves and even get a paid job.” How might these changes have affected the lives of some women?
6. What could women still not do during the Empire?